

## Inside this issue:

Administrator's Notes	1
Letter from the New Editor	2
The Care of Leather and Skin Objects	2
PCHS News	5
Historical Organizations	6
Calendar of Events	7
Artifact Highlight	7

### Ralph Gibson

Interim Placer County  
Museums Administrator  
101 Maple St.  
Auburn, CA 95603  
(530) 889-6500  
[rgibson@placer.ca.gov](mailto:rgibson@placer.ca.gov)

### Michael Otten

President Placer County  
Historical Society  
P.O. Box 5643  
Auburn, CA 95604

### Jason Adair

Editor and Staff Writer  
530-889-7702  
[jadair@placer.ca.gov](mailto:jadair@placer.ca.gov)

## Administrators Notes

November-December Volume 16, Issue 6

### Ralph Gibson

Although I have yet to hand out candy to little goblins, witches, or superheroes, this issue of *The Placer* is for the Holidays. This year, the Bernhard Museum will be decorated for Victorian Christmas by November 26<sup>th</sup>. We'll also have touches of a Gold Rush Christmas at the Gold Country Museum. For those of you who have never made it to either of these museums during the Holidays, it is something special and goes well beyond decorations.

At the Bernhard, visitors will learn about Victorian Christmas traditions such as what went into plum pudding, how the trees were decorated, and what songs the Victorians loved to sing during the season.

At the Gold Country Museum, the subtle splashes of Christmas decorations certainly make visitors feel the Holi-

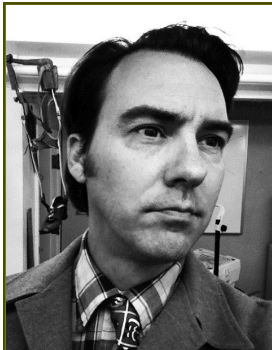
days have arrived, but we also display three accounts of Christmas day in 1849. Each are from published diaries. One recounts life in a cabin for two miners in Auburn on Christmas morning of 1849; another on the hard trail to California; and the last being from a man on his way to California by clipper ship. Each journal entry gives a unique



glimpse into the lives of men who risked it all to come to California during the Gold Rush.

I hope each of you has a wonderful Holiday season!

## A Letter from the New Editor



Jason Adair

Dear Readers, it's time once again for a sea change here at *The Placer*. After two fantastic years, Kasia has stepped down so that she may focus more on the museum collection and less on keeping Ralph Gibson and Michael Otten on time.

As you've probably noticed, I've freshened up the look of the physi-

cal newsletter. (I didn't want to put "new and improved" on the masthead, because that would be gauche, but please feel free to refer to it that way.) I've also changed the way the online version looks and works. If you weren't even aware that we had an online version, you can check it out at [avoiceofhistory.blogspot.com](http://avoiceofhistory.blogspot.com).

Another change I'd like to facilitate is the ability for readers to submit history related articles about their museums, historical societies, personal collections etc..

Hopefully this will lead to more and better coverage of history that would otherwise go by unnoticed. So, send your submissions, and photos, to our main office or you can email them to me directly at [jadair@placer.ca.gov](mailto:jadair@placer.ca.gov).

The final change I want to point out is that Ralph has been ~~fired~~ relieved of the Museums Intelligence column which will now be written by Beth Rohlfes. Also, the name of the column has been changed to, The Scoop

That is all.

## The Care of Leather and Skin Objects

Kasia Woroniecka

Some of the most versatile and durable objects found in museum collections are made of leather. Cow hide, for example, is used in making shoe soles, trunks or belts; calf skin in the making of upholstery, shoes and book bindings; deer skin in the making of parchment and gloves; and sheep skin in the making of suede leathers.

Museum maintenance objectives are different from those of objects used in everyday life. Leather upholstery, shoes or purses were developed with active use in mind. Museums, on the other hand,

strive to preserve their objects in a condition as close as possible to the original and unaltered state.

There are many leather cleaners, moisturizers and dressings to keep leather objects supple, pliable, and resilient. The use of leather dressings in museum collections is very limited, and generally the only time they are used is when flexibility is required, such as the opening and closing of a leather bound book. Conservators sometimes use dressings or lubricants to reshape objects that have been deformed or otherwise damaged. The use of lubricants should be avoided un-

less necessary. They can attract dust and mold and act as a seal to repel moisture, causing the leather to dry out. Much like with wooden objects, there is no need to "feed" leather - it is already dead. Renaissance Wax can be used to improve the appearance of the surface. Other lubricants will darken the leather. Do not treat leather in a way that it has not been treated with in the past as it can cause damage like discoloration or possible disfigurement. Stiff leather objects should not be softened by any treatment. When broken they can be glued together, but professional treatment is recommended.



Storing leather objects in consistent temperature and humidity is very important. Stable, cool and dry conditions are usually the best. Avoid storing leather items near sources of heat or in strong light. Heat can cause excessive drying and shrinkage, which can lead to warping, cracking and tears. Three-dimensional objects like leather shoes should be stuffed with unbuffered, acid free tissue paper to retain their shape. Heavy objects



should be stored flat, preferably on acid-free trays that make moving without flexing and handling possible. Objects with straps or handles should not be stored hanging by those attachments.

Exposure of high relative humidity or high temperature is especially dangerous if you have a collection of leather bound books. These conditions are ideal for red rot, which causes the leather to become darker and powdery, finally causing it to deteriorate. Leather book bindings made between 1850 - 1900 are especially susceptible.

Collections of Native American artifacts often contain objects made of rawhide or buckskin, such as drums, shields, moccasins and coats. Rawhide is animal skin that has not gone through any leather treating process but simply dried. Buckskin is semi-tanned leather that had all the flesh removed from the skin and dried after oil and fat emulsion has been rubbed into it. Both rawhide and buckskin are very susceptible to changes in temperature and relative humidity and should be stored at temperature below 75F with 45%-55% relative humidity.



Good housekeeping and maintenance

are important when storing leather, skin and fur objects as they are susceptible to mold growth, insect and rodent attacks. The larvae of some common pests like cloth moths and carpet beetles can destroy objects in a matter of days. For that reason they should be monitored every few months in spaces with good air circulation.

If you discover mold on your object, seal it in a plastic bag to make sure that the spores are not transferred to other objects before you move to an area where you can clean it. Mold can disfigure and stain objects so time is of the essence. If the object is wet, allow it to dry partially. Use a vacuum cleaner to remove any growth, making sure that there are no loose pieces or decorations or that the nozzle does not touch the surface causing smears or stains. Vacuuming removes the surface growth, but because the spores remain in the leather the surface can be treated with isopropyl alcohol. Test the area first, since alcohol can cause discoloration. To make sure that the objects retains its shape while drying stuff it with crimped acid-free tissue paper. When in doubt, *consult a conservator!*





# The Scoop

*Beth Rohlfes*

Contemporary theories of museums and how they engage people are hugely different from what they were 30, even 15 years ago. In a seminar a few years back, I was struck by a speaker's comment that museums could no longer get away with just "showing dead things in glass cases." Well, we've come a long way from that! But what are we doing here in Placer County to

keep up with our fast-evolving world and your ever-changing needs and expectations?

First let me dispel some fear. Those of you who've been around long enough to remember rather enjoying those dead things in glass cases, never fear. Historical artifacts and the stories behind them are still at the heart of the museum experience. Our goal is to get rid of them, but to improve our connection to them, and show that the real facts of history are often stranger than fiction and more interesting than the latest crop of reality television shows..

One way we're looking to maximize the museum experience is by expanding the definition of what

space a traditional museum is supposed to occupy. To this end, we actively engage the smart phone and computer-prone through Facebook, blogs and other web-based experiences. While this virtually fills every inch of the planet that has cell phone reception, we're also bringing small exhibits to non traditional spaces outside our museum walls.



**Our first in a series of off-site exhibits is currently at "the Domes"** in Auburn. Stop in to see a showcase of antique cameras paired with historic photos of life in Placer County. A second display, at the Community Development Resource Agency (CDRA) office in Tahoe City, will feature vintage ski equipment and photographs marking the early develop-

ment of winter sports in Placer County. And one more coming in November to the hallways of the Placer County Finance and Administration Building, will contain vintage vignettes of offices past.

This doesn't mean we're not adding new artifacts to our collection.

**Frank Ordaz's painting "Welcome to Auburn,"** a heartwarming portrait of museum docent Chris Francee, is now part of our permanent collection and is on display at the Placer County Courthouse. Generously donated by Ordaz, the painting won first place in a recent show at the Auburn City Hall. Thanks to Mike Holmes and Randall Fee for contributing the frame.

So, don't pass over our traditional museum sites. Look again, then look closer at what's really happening inside our museum walls. You will find much more than dead things in glass cases, and hopefully, a story or two that you'll want to think about again and want to share.

# Placer County Historical Society News

## Presidents Message

*Michael Otten,  
President*

### **History Sleuths: Who's Caroline?**

*Whoever she is,  
Whatever she is,  
What secrets lay  
Buried with thee?  
Mystery woman?  
Mystery beast?  
Old Auburn Cemetery  
Visitors do inquire.  
Researchers await a clue.  
Help! Please do.*

Much ado is being made over Caroline's final resting place. She was the hit of the Oct. 20 Community Education Program, "Historical Haunts: A Tour of Notable Plots." Auburn City Historian April McDonald says Caroline's gravestone "represents the biggest mystery in all."

The marker reads; "This stone is placed by Col. Clayton Hale, U.S. Army, in memory of his faithful servant and devoted friend: Caroline who died in Auburn Dec. 21, 1889." Some think she was maid or possibly a horse or dog.

The photo above is posted on the lunchroom bulletin board at the Archives and Research Center,

11526 Ave., in the old Dewitt Center.



McDonald says many have tried to solve the mystery. Melinda and James Landrith, who have done extensive research on area cemeteries, "tried in vain to find out who Caroline was?"

Have a clue? Contact the Archives and Research Center at (530) 889-7789 or [dpoulsen@placer.ca.gov](mailto:dpoulsen@placer.ca.gov).

McDonald says that what researchers know so far about Col. Hale is that he never lived in Auburn. He was a younger brother of James Ellery Hale, a lawyer in Pennsylvania who came to California in the 1849 gold rush. James made quite a name for himself here as lawyer, judge, state senator and a member of the 1879 state Constitutional Convention among other things. James died in 1895 and is buried here. Clayton

died in 1896 in Iowa.

Avid researcher John Knox scoured death, cemetery and monument maker records as well as newspapers of the period. He found no mention of Col. Hale visiting his brother here at the time of Caroline's death, though Hale did purchase the plot. Some photos and information on the grave sites are available through Glenda Ragan's Old Auburn Cemetery link on [findagrave.com](http://findagrave.com), and in Gus Thompson's *Media Watch* in the Auburn Journal.

Gus Thomson marks 25 years as a star Auburn Journal reporter next month. The Placer County Historical Society honored Gus and his wife, Karen, at the September dinner meeting. After a quarter century of Thomson making and noting local history like no other, we felt it was time for a framed recognition. The reporter says he loves the area's rich history. Not only did he major in history, two of his children are following in his footsteps.

From his pen and pad days Thomson has broadened his skills to digital reporting on the Gold Country Media websites. His video of the Sept. 20 rededication ceremony of

Continued from page 5



the Virginiatown plaque can be found at the Auburn Journal online.

The original State Historical Landmark 400 was stolen in 2012. It was probably the biggest gathering at the site of the former ghost town since 1952 when some 100 showed up for the original dedication.

[otten@ssctv.net](mailto:otten@ssctv.net)

## Placer County Historical Society Dinner Meeting

*Addah Owens, Vice President*

**When:** Thursday December 5th

**Time:** 6:30 Dinner, 7:30 Program

**Where:** Veterans Memorial Hall,  
100 East St., Auburn, CA

**Cost:** \$14 per person

**Menu:** Roast Beef & Turkey,  
Mashed Potatoes & Gravy, Green  
Bean Casserole, Green Salad,  
Rolls, Apple Crisp

**Mail Check to:** PCHS, c/o Betty  
Samson, 8780 Baxter Grade Road,  
Auburn, CA 95603

**Program:** Richard Harley & T.J. Meekins will tell the story of the Golden State's transformation from a sleepy colonial outpost to a pivotal player in the upheaval that almost destroyed the United States. The duo use art, maps, and photos to trace the political and military history of California from the Mexican era to the War Between the States.

We will also be having our annual "drawing" with tickets on sale during the evening.

## Placer County Historical Organizations

**Colfax Area Historical Society**  
Helen Wayland, (530) 346-7040  
[colfaxhistory.org](http://colfaxhistory.org)

**Donner Summit Historical Society**  
Bill Oudegeest, (209) 606-6859  
[donnersummithistoricalsociety.org](http://donnersummithistoricalsociety.org)

**Foresthill Divide Historical Society**  
Sandy Simester, (530) 367-3535  
[foresthillhistory.org](http://foresthillhistory.org)

**Fruitvale School Hall Community Association**  
Lyndell Grey, (916) 645-3517

**Golden Drift Historical Society**  
Jim Ricker, (530) 389-8344

**Roseville Fire Museum**  
Shari Tasler, (916) 538-1809

**Historical Advisory Board**  
Glenn Vineyard, (916) 747-1961

**Old Town Auburn Preservation Society**  
Lynn Carpenter, (530) 885-1252

**Lincoln Highway Association**  
Bob Dieterich,  
[bobd@iname.com](mailto:bobd@iname.com) or [lincolnhwy.org](http://lincolnhwy.org)

**Lincoln Area Archives Museum**  
Shirley Russell, (916) 645-3800

**Joss House Museum and Chinese History Center**  
Richard Yue, (530) 346-7121

**Lincoln Area Archives Museum**  
Shirley Russell, (916) 645-3800

**Loomis Basin Historical Society**  
Karen Clifford, (916) 663-3871  
[ppgn.com/loomishistorical.html](http://ppgn.com/loomishistorical.html)

**Maidu Museum & Historic Site**  
Glenie Strome, (916) 782-3299  
[roseville.ca.us/indianmuseum](http://roseville.ca.us/indianmuseum)

**Native Sons of the Golden West, Parlor #59**  
Dave Allen, (530) 878-2878  
[dsallen59@sbcglobal.net](mailto:dsallen59@sbcglobal.net)

**Newcastle Portuguese Hall Association**  
Aileen Gage, (530) 885-911

**Placer County Historical Society**  
Michael Otten, (530) 888-7837  
[placercountyhistoricalsociety.org](http://placercountyhistoricalsociety.org)

**Placer County Museums Docent Guild**  
Tom Innes, (530) 888-8969

**Rocklin Historical Society**  
Jean Sippola, (916) 652-1034  
[rocklinhistory.org](http://rocklinhistory.org)

**Roseville Historical Society**  
Phoebe Astill, (916) 773-3003  
[rosevillehistorical.org](http://rosevillehistorical.org)

**North Lake Tahoe Historical Society**  
Javier Rodriguez, (530) 583-1762  
[northtahoemuseums.org](http://northtahoemuseums.org)

**Placer County Genealogical Society,**  
Toni Rosasco, (530) 888-8036  
[pcgenes.com](http://pcgenes.com)



## Calendar of events

### November

7 6:30pm

Placer County Historical Society Board Meeting at City Hall, Rm. 10, 1225 Lincoln Way, Auburn. (530)885-5074

12 4:00pm

Roseville Historical Society meeting at Carnegie Museums, 557 Lincoln St., Roseville. (916)773-3003

18 6:00pm

Forest Hill Divide Historical Society business meeting, at the Forest Hill Divide Museum. (530)367-3535

18 7:00pm

Rocklin Historical Society Meeting at Old St. Mary's Chapel, 5152 Front Street, Rocklin. (916)624-3464

20 6:30pm

Loomis Basin Historical Society meeting at the Loomis library. (916)663-3971

22 6:30pm

Community Education Program: *The Transcontinental Railroad from Sacramento to Donner Summit*. Film and Presentation at the Bernhard Museum Winery. (530)889-6500

28 7:00pm

Placer County Genealogical Society general meeting, in the Beecher Room, at the Auburn Library. (530)885-2216

### December

5 6:30pm

Placer County Historical Society Christmas Dinner at the Auburn Veterans Memorial Hall, 100 East St., Auburn. (530)885-5074

10 4:00pm

Roseville Historical Society Meeting at the Carnegie Museum, 557 Lincoln Street, Roseville. (916)773-3003

14 & 21 5:00pm

Community Education program: *Old Town Country Christmas* at the Historic Courthouse, 101 Maple Street, Auburn. (530)889-6500

16 7:00pm

Rocklin Historical Society Meeting at Old St. Mary's Chapel, 5152 Front Street, Rocklin. (916)624-3464

18 5:30pm

Historical Advisory Board Meeting at the Bernhard Museum Winery, 291 Auburn-Folsom Rd. Auburn. (530)889-6500

18 6:30pm

Loomis Basin Historical Society Meeting at the Loomis Library. (916)663-3871

26 7:00pm

Placer County Genealogical Society general meeting in the Beecher Room at the Auburn Library. (530)885-2216

## Artifact Highlight

Powder horns were often made of cow or ox horns, but the one in our collection is made of embossed leather with a brass opening. The design shows a deer surrounded by

oak leaves. Powder horns were used before the invention of the modern cartridge. They carried the black powder propellant necessary to load and fire the firearm.



**Placer County Museums**  
101 Maple Street  
Auburn, CA 95603

